

Putting Together the “Legacy Trust”

► On the DNR-managed Chehalis Western Trail, Commissioner Sutherland joins DNR staff in a fitness test for agency firefighters.

Several options exist to acquire Legacy Trust lands. In addition to accepting private donations of land or cash, the State could issue General Obligation Bonds to fund the purchase of Legacy Trust lands. Each year for 10 years, \$13.1 million would be needed to build the trust, consisting of about 60 percent forestlands and 40 percent commercial real estate assets.

The people of Washington State would own these properties, that generate a consistent source of non-tax funding dedicated to protecting the legacy of outdoor recreation and natural areas stewardship on state lands. The fully endowed Legacy Trust would provide the lion’s share of this funding for this generation, and for generations to come.

Managing trust lands is what DNR does!

Since statehood, the State Trust Lands have provided funds for important public projects. And just since 1970, DNR’s management has earned \$5.7 billion non-tax dollars — mostly to build the state’s public schools and universities, and to help fund services in many counties.

Just as on other State Trust lands, DNR would sell timber from the new forested Legacy Trust lands, while protecting habitat; or commercial properties would be leased. Of course, rent rates and timber prices rise and fall, leading to a fluctuation of returns. But DNR has a proven track record on managing trust lands over time. On Legacy Trust lands, an average return of about 6.75 percent each year is expected.

For information, call DNR at 360-902-1000.
DNR’s website: <http://www.dnr.wa.gov>.



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How the Legacy Trust would change things

In 1990 DNR’s recreation program received almost \$3 million (in today’s dollars) in Capital and General Fund Operating dollars. By 2001, this funding had dropped to less than \$740,000. For 2004, with many more visitors on state lands, the program received Capital funding of \$531,000, and no General Fund Operating dollars. All this would change with the Legacy Trust.

Revenue earned from Legacy Trust lands would begin to replace the current State General Fund share of the recreation and natural areas programs’ budgets. The fully endowed Legacy Trust would provide about \$8.8 million per year — \$6.6 million for the program funding and \$2.2 million for trust management and re-investment to keep the lands productive. This amount would meet the unfunded \$6.6 million needed to carry out safe, effective programs.

This funding would not take the place of other grants. Over time, new funds would replace the State General Fund share and complement the capital project funding from grants.

Benefits of Legacy Trust Funding

For 2.2 million acres of DNR-managed lands, the funds would aid the planning, building and maintaining of facilities and trail infrastructure, pay for environmental monitoring to protect habitat and water quality while providing recreation opportunities. Funds would help pay for law enforcement staff, campground hosts, testing of drinking water, cleanup of trash and vandalism damage; and for overseeing volunteer groups.

Stewardship of the natural areas would mean monitoring, offering more research and educational opportunities to universities and schools, and developing other compatible public access (depending on the site); and controlling invasive weeds and providing other protection.

DORIAN SMITH / DNR

Enjoying Washington’s natural open spaces is part of what makes our state such a wonderful place to live.

Unfortunately, as the number of visitors to these lands has grown, the funding needed to be good stewards has dwindled to almost zero. The taxpayers of Washington have invested billions of dollars, and to let invasive weeds, lawlessness and overuse destroy this legacy is simply irresponsible.

We must find a new, long-term source of funding that will provide a consistent stream of non-tax revenue for recreation and conservation. That’s what the Legacy Trust is all about — protecting a legacy that is too important to ignore.

Without other choices, the Legacy Trust is the only option to protect that legacy.



Doug Sutherland
Commissioner of Public Lands

A New Model for Funding Recreation and Conservation

For more than a decade, Washington has seen a growing need to fund recreation on state lands and protect special conservation lands managed by Washington’s Department of Natural Resources (DNR). While that need has grown, so too have other demands on limited State dollars. Funding has not been able to keep up with demand.

What can be done?

Over the years a variety of solutions to this shortfall have been offered:

Increase property or other taxes — the apparent appetite for such tax increases is very low, and the competition for limited tax revenues is high.

Charge user fees — innumerable access points along forest roads make it difficult to consistently collect fees, and as a result, collection costs could be more than the fees. Fee collection also may increase liability, risking enormous judgments against the state.

Reduce costs by limiting access or closing areas — this violates a critical tenet: state lands should be open for recreation to Washington’s citizens.

An innovative solution

A long-term solution is needed to provide dedicated and sustainable funding:

► Funding that doesn’t come from taxes;

► Funding that doesn’t rely on inconsistent revenue sources or compete with other important state programs for funding.

This solution is the Legacy Trust for Recreation and Conservation

The “Legacy Trust” would consist of commercial properties and forest lands, managed to produce revenue in the same business-like manner as other state trust lands. Revenue would pay for the stewardship of state natural areas, keep millions of acres of forest and other state lands open for recreation, and help secure the safety that families visiting the forests deserve. DNR would manage the new trust’s lands to the high standards it manages other state trust lands.

Strategically located forestland could be acquired for the Legacy Trust — forests that help preserve a balance of developed areas, communities, and open space and habitat in forest landscapes across the state. In addition to providing revenue, the Legacy Trust’s forests would support local jobs, communities, scenic beauty, and also keep land in forests that wildlife need as our state grows.



► **Without new funding, how are recreation and natural areas at risk?**

SEE INSIDE

► **How would DNR generate funds to keep public lands open to the public?**

► **What type of lands would be part of the Legacy Trust?**

► **How much money would the Legacy Trust generate each year?**

SEE BACK PANEL

Every year, more than nine million visitors enjoy DNR-managed lands. They come to fish in trout streams, ride horses, hunt, hike, and bike. They come to stay in horse camps, walk on wetland boardwalks and interpretive trails, and camp overnight. They come to do research on rare plants and native ecosystems. They come to enjoy their inheritance. | On the 2.2 million acres of State Trust forestlands, we have 85 campgrounds, 725 camp sites, 225 picnic units, 65 trailheads, 325 toilet buildings and 1,000 miles of approved trails. We also have 77 natural areas throughout the state, encompassing 125,000 acres. | The level of public use in the state's scenic vistas, natural areas, and passive and active recreation areas has outstripped our ability to maintain them, and provide safe public access, which requires constant and ongoing efforts.

Offering safe recreational opportunities and protecting special native ecosystems on state lands requires constant and ongoing efforts — and a new source of support.

